

Northern California is home to one of the most diverse and productive agricultural regions in the nation. Our farmers and ranchers are leading producers of rice, almonds, walnuts, dried plums, peaches, wheat, dairy, and beef. Maintaining productive agriculture in the North State is critically important to the overall health of our local economy. The federal "Farm Bill" helps keep our growers competitive in today's global marketplace by providing a "safety net" for the production of staple commodities such as rice, wheat, and dairy and important crop research and marketing assistance for the production of fruits, nuts, and vegetables. I believe investing in American agriculture is vitally important to our nation's economy and security, but I also support transitioning away from traditional crop subsidies toward a more market-oriented system. Doing so, however, requires that we successfully level the international playing field for America's farmers and ranchers. Unless and until the unfair trade barriers that make it difficult for our farmers to access important markets are removed, I believe it would be unwise for the United States to unilaterally disarm by abandoning support for our farmers. I
f we were to so do, U.S. producers could very well lose out to subsidized foreign competition.

A key aspect of such a transition therefore - and something I have made my top priority as a Member of the Ways & Means Subcommittee on Trade - is breaking down foreign trade barriers, reducing foreign subsidies, and expanding international marketing opportunities for Northern California agriculture. Because our farmers generally produce more food than we consume domestically, overseas market development is absolutely critical to helping them meet their bottom line here at home. But today, our farmers face unfair barriers to trade. Many of their toughest overseas competitors are protected by high tariffs, subsidies, and import regulations that have the effect of keeping out U.S. agricultural products and limiting the competitiveness of America's farmers and ranchers.

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